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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY, ABC SUED FOR RACKETEERING
LOS ANGELES

A political action group filed a \$170 million lawsuit Monday alleging that the CIA, ABC television network and military officials engaged in racketeering and defamed a man who claims to be a former agent.

The Southern California chapter of Americans for Democratic Action filed the suit in federal court on behalf of Scott Barnes, who claims to be a former operative whom the CIA ordered to kill another operative in Hawaii.

The suit stems from an ABC "World News Tonight" interview with Barnes last September in which Barnes said the CIA ordered him to kill another operative, Ronald Rewald. Barnes said he refused to carry out the order.

ABC eventually retracted the story, and the ADA's suit alleges that the CIA forced the network to do so.

In its retraction, ABC News said that Barnes had refused to undergo a lie detector test and that ABC did not have information to support his story, the attorney said.

Ralph Fertig, a private lawyer representing the ADA in the suit, said offered to take a lie detector test seven times, and that the network had information to corroborate his client's story.

"The CIA and naval intelligence worked with ABC to perpetrate a lie against Barnes," said Fertig. "More than the money, we want a retraction, vindication and clarification. We want equity. We want what's fair."

The lawsuit names as defendants CIA Director William Casey, the American Broadcasting Co., ABC President of News and Sports Roone Arledge, news anchorman Peter Jennings and other ABC officials, as well as Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and Navy Secretary John F. Lehman Jr.

Also named in the suit was Capitol Cities Communications Inc., which has filed with the Federal Communications Commission to purchase ABC.

CIA spokeswoman Kathy Pherson declined Monday to comment on the suit because the papers had not been received by the CIA. However, she said Barnes never worked for the agency.

"We have said we have never been involved in a plot to kill Ronald Rewald or any other U.S. citizen," Ms. Pherson said. "There's an executive order that prohibits the U.S. government from engaging in or even contemplating engaging in assassinations of American citizens or anyone."

ABC spokeswoman Elise Adde in Washington said Monday she had not seen the lawsuit and could not comment.

The lawsuit says the government and ABC violated the Racketeering Influenced by Corrupt Organizations Act, interfered with Barnes' First Amendment rights and conspired to defame his character.

It asserts that those named in the suit prevented Barnes from selling a book and movie rights.